

***IOWA DISTRICT COURT, FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT***

IN THE MATTER OF THE REAPPOINTMENT  
OF THE STANDING COURTHOUSE  
SECURITY COMMITTEE FOR POLK  
COUNTY

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2013-9

The Iowa Supreme Court recognizing the increasing intimidation or violence against judges, court personnel and members of the public who use the state courts established a Court Security Improvement Task Force. It directed the task force to compile standards for state and county governments to use as a guideline to follow so that they may provide for a safe environment for delivery of justice in county courthouses.

After the perusal of surveys, recommendations and reports, and after consideration of county population, court workload and other factors that impact the need for various levels of court security, the Court Security Improvement Task Force has prepared *Guidelines for Courthouse Security in Iowa (1999)*, available on line at [www.iowacourts.gov](http://www.iowacourts.gov).


This Court, in accordance with the *Guidelines for Courthouse Security in Iowa*, found in Administrative Orders 2000-26, 2004-02, 2007-13, and 2010-22 that a Standing Courthouse Security Committee be established for each county in the Fifth Judicial District of Iowa. The committee members for each county shall include individuals named by the chairperson of the County Board of Supervisors and the chief judge of the judicial district. It is appropriate at this time to update the committee membership from 2010 to reflect various changes in personnel at the various entities.

NOW THEREFORE IT IS ORDERED the following individuals are hereby appointed to the Polk County Standing Courthouse Security Committee:

Karen Romano, District Court Judge, Chair  
Eliza Ovrom, District Court Judge  
Rebecca Goodgame Ebinger, District Court Judge  
Joseph Seidlin, Polk County Magistrate  
Elizabeth Baldwin, District Court Administrator  
Sherrie Schuck, Court Administration  
Randy Osborn, Clerk of Court  
Sheriff Bill McCarthy, Polk County Sheriff  
Chief Leesa Shoemaker, Polk County Sheriff's Office  
Major Donna Brooks, Polk County Sheriff's Office  
Lieutenant Jeff Wilkinson, Polk County Sheriff's Office  
Nan Horvat, Polk County Attorney's Office  
Tom Hockensmith, Board of Supervisors  
Mike Grimaldi, Director of General Services, Polk County  
John Rowen, Assistant Director of General Services, Polk County  
Bob Cataldo, Risk Management, Polk County  
Eric Kool, Juvenile Court Officer IV

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Polk County Standing Courthouse Security Committee should use the *Guidelines for Courthouse Security in Iowa* as an advisory during meetings concerning the security of the county courthouse and meet quarterly to discuss safety and security issues, and more often when necessary.

Done this 28<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2013.

  
ARTHUR E. GAMBLE, Chief Judge  
Fifth Judicial District of Iowa

Copies to:

Polk County Standing Courthouse Security Committee Members  
David Boyd, State Court Administrator  
John Goerd, Deputy State Court Administrator  
John Sarcone, Polk County Attorney  
William McCarthy, Polk County Sheriff  
Tom Hockensmith, Polk County Board of Supervisors, Chair

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# Guidelines for Courthouse Security in Iowa

## I. Rationale

These guidelines apply to the security of all structures that contain court-related facilities. In court security, the emphasis is on prevention, containment, and control - all directed towards the protection of life and property and the preservation of the judicial process. The guidelines provide the principal elements of court security planning. They point to key security and safety issues that should be addressed by court administrators, law enforcement officials, and Boards of Supervisors. In general, the guidelines provide a flexible and workable approach for ensuring safe and secure court facilities.

## II. Direction and Oversight of Courthouse Security

Each county shall establish a Courthouse Security Committee. The chairperson of the County Board of Supervisors and the chief judge of the judicial district shall appoint the committee members, who shall include a representative of the sheriff, court administration, clerk of court, Board of Supervisors, and other key offices of the courthouse. The committee should meet quarterly to discuss safety and security issues, and meet more often when necessary.

Directives concerning courthouse security shall be written as directed by the Courthouse Security Committee. Each directive shall be reviewed by the committee and approved by the chief judge of the judicial district, the county sheriff, and the Board of Supervisors.

## III. Guidelines

**Ia-CHS-01** A directive establishes a written *Court Facilities Security Plan*, which should include at least the following sections:

- Physical security plan
- Security operations
- Hostage situation response plan
- High-risk trial plan
- Emergency procedures for: fire, bomb threat, tornado warning, or other disaster

Fire drills must be practiced on an annual basis, and other drills should be practiced as often as necessary. All employees shall participate in emergency drills when scheduled. New employees of the courthouse shall receive initial training on emergency procedures and updated when changed.

**Ia-CHS-02** The physical security plan includes adequate provisions in at least the following areas:

exterior lighting	courtroom bench security
interior lighting	alarms (duress and intrusion)
evacuation routes	parking lot lighting and security
communications	fire detection, smoke detectors
doors and windows	hydrants, hoses, extinguishers

A monthly inspection of these items will be made to ensure serviceability.

**Ia-CHS-03    A written directive establishing or modifying the court facilities security plan is immediately available to all persons with court security responsibilities.**

The written directive governing security is immediately available to persons assigned to the function. Employees will sign off indicating that they have reviewed and understand these plans.

**Ia-CHS-04    A written directive establishes liaison among persons sharing responsibility for court facilities security.**

When security issues are shared with a court administrator, chief judge, sheriff, security committee, or others, there should be clearly understood responsibilities and channels of communications to ensure adequate security for the facility.

**Ia-CHS-05    A written directive governs weapons in the courthouse.**

This directive or policy should be uniform throughout the judicial district.

**Ia-CHS-06    When directives prohibit weapons in parts of the courthouse, lock-boxes are available and are located in a controlled area having limited access to the public.**

**Ia-CHS-07** When dangerous substances, including weapons, flammable materials, and other substances are maintained in the courthouse, they are stored in a secure area.

A secure area with dangerous substances will include the following security characteristics:

1. access is limited to those specifically identified to have access.
2. the door is locked by a deadbolt lock or padlock, when not occupied.
3. doors with exposed hinges have hinge pins welded or turned to preclude removal.
4. windows are covered with permanently affixed bars or expanded steel mesh.
5. the area is ventilated and not subjected to extremes of hot or cold within limits shown on containers.

**Ia-CHS-08** The secure area used for storage of dangerous substances in the courthouse is equipped with fire-fighting equipment and an intrusion alarm.

The fire-fighting equipment can be as sophisticated as a sprinkler system or as simple as a fire extinguisher.

**Ia-CHS-09** A local professionally trained fire inspector or the Iowa Fire Marshall's Office shall conduct an annual fire safety inspection to ensure compliance with fire safety regulations for buildings open to the public.

**Ia-CHS-10** A written directive designates circulation patterns governing movement of people in the courthouse.

Patterns may include those for the public, employees, prisoners, and judges.

**Ia-CHS-11** There are secure or controlled entrances to bring prisoners into the courthouse.

These could be in the form of a sallyport or an entrance from which the public is restricted, at least at the time of prisoner movement.

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**Ia-CHS-12** Prisoners brought into court should be accompanied by a trained peace officer.

To adequately deter and manage incidences involving unruly defendants in the court, they should be guarded by trained peace officers, rather than by civilian guards.

**Ia-CHS-13** A written directive governs required searches of the courtroom for contraband.

At a minimum, someone should conduct a visual examination of the courtroom for

contraband immediately prior to the beginning of a court session.

**Ia-CHS-14     A written directive governs use of restraints on defendants in custody while in the courthouse.**

The use of all restraining devices should be clearly set forth as applicable to all defendants in custody, whether they are male, female, juvenile, or handicapped persons. Application of policy should be uniform and consistent. Restraints should be used at all times except during jury trials. During long trials restraints shall be used in the discretion of the trial judge.

**Ia-CHS-15     A written directive governs key control for the court facility.**

Keys, particularly masters and grand masters, should be under close supervision at all times. Their issuance should be strictly controlled. The loss of keys for sensitive areas requires rekeying of affected locks without delay.

**Ia-CHS-16     The sheriff or a qualified designee shall conduct an annual security survey for the court facility.**

The person conducting the survey should identify himself/herself and should note his or her name on the title page of the survey. A copy of the survey should be delivered to the chief judge of the judicial district and the clerk of court in the county where the facility is located. In addition, whenever there is structural change in the court facility, the sheriff (or designee) should update the survey.

**Ia-CHS-17     Equipment used for courthouse security is specifically identified and its availability recorded in an appropriate document.**

It is important that personnel know the types, qualities, condition, and location of such equipment. A list that identifies dates of acquisition and shelf life for such material as electronic gear, such as alarms, communications equipment, fire detection and fire fighting items, restraints items, and first aid equipment.

**Ia-CHS-18     Court facilities are equipped with duress alarms in courtrooms and other appropriate locations.**

Duress alarms are usually operated by switches at the judge's bench, but the judge's chambers, clerk's office or juvenile court services office might also require at least one duress alarm. The alarms shall terminate in an area from which a rapid response shall be made to the call for assistance, such as the Sheriff's Office or County Communications Center.

**Ia-CHS-19     All duress alarms are tested once per month and the results are recorded.**

Confidence in the performance of these alarm systems is essential. Law enforcement or court administration staff should conduct these tests and be responsible for maintaining a record of the test results.

- Ia-CHS-20     An armed peace officer trained in courthouse security should be designated for immediate response to any duress alarm or call for assistance from court personnel.
- Ia-CHS-21     A judge's courtroom bench should include some type of bullet-proof barrier to provide the judge some protection from attack with a gun.
- Ia-CHS-22     During times a courtroom is not occupied it will be kept locked with restricted key access.
- Ia-CHS-23     Court facilities are equipped with an adequate emergency light source. The emergency light source shall be tested monthly and test results should be documented.
- Ia-CHS-24     Courtrooms and court facilities are equipped with at least one means of external verbal communications, such as a telephone.
- Ia-CHS-25     A written directive requires an emergency medical plan for the courthouse.

This plan should include the medical resources available to the courthouse and the procedures required to put the plan in effect.

- Ia-CHS-26     The courthouse security officer has access to a magnetometer.

A hand-held magnetometer will satisfy this requirement .

- Ia-CHS-27     There is a procedure for securing all admitted evidence when the court is not in session.

To preserve the integrity of the legal process, courts require a method for securing evidence that has been admitted to prevent tampering or theft when the court is recessed or is not in session.